

SA Sociological Review Vol.2 No.1 pp. 37 – 51

Customary Rights and Compound Control in Late Colonial Swaziland

Jonathan Crush

Abstract

After 1930, Swaziland experienced a massive influx of foreign mining and agribusiness capital. Archaic and anarchic forms of labour control already in place on the country's white farms and tin mines were inadequate on the new mines and plantations. A more modern system of industrial relations emerged in which the Swazi aristocracy played a central role. This paper focuses on a series of events at the Havelock asbestos mine between 1939 and 1945 when this system was put in place. Particular attention is paid to the 1944 Strike at the mine.

Introduction

In the early 1960s, the calm of late colonial Swaziland was shattered by a wave of industrial unrest. The strikes began in timber in April 1962 and spread, with growing unruliness and violence, throughout the country (Fransman, 1978; Booth, 1983:32). The British administration responded with force. It declared a national state of emergency, made mass arrests and flew in an army battalion from Kenya – the First Battalion Gordon Highlanders – to help the beleaguered local police force. Order was eventually restored by the British troops who occupied the country for five years during the transition to independence.

In a report on Swaziland's labour legislation in 1960, F.C. Catchpole had warned of the defects in the colony's system of industrial relations (Catchpole, 1960). Wage rates were non-negotiable, trade unions non-existent, and all of the major industrial concerns simply employed Swazi *ndunas* (or headmen) to keep the peace. The 'nduna system' had been developed on the gold mines of the Witwatersrand and extended to Swaziland in the 1930s. What distinguished the local variant was the centrality of the Swazi monarchy and *liqoqo* (Inner Council) in the operation of the system.

The employers and the colonial state gave Sobhuza and his advisors discretion over the choice and appointment of *ndunas*. In addition, Sobhuza had his own personal representatives (or *tindvuna*) on most of the large mines and plantations. The *Tindvuna* were usually hereditary clan chiefs, often of the Dlamini aristocracy. Sobhuza and the *liqoqo* also constituted a second line of authority upon whom employers and the state could call for more direct intervention in the event of industrial disputes. Catchpole questioned the adequacy and legitimacy of this system. His concerns were vindicated by the crisis of 1962-3. Despite their best efforts, neither Sobhuza nor his representatives were able to control or defuse the unrest. The colonial administration restructured its labour policies to allow formal organization and to encourage 'moderate' trade union activity among black workers in Swaziland (Crush, forthcoming). Until that time, however, the *tindvuna* system had actually served capital and the state quite well.

Examples of organized labour protest by Swazi workers are rare before the 1960s. The first recorded strike in the country occurred as early as 1893 and there are numerous examples of Swazi participation in strike action on the Witwatersrand over the years (Bonner, 1979:284; Crush, 1987:198-99). But until the 1940s, the internal working class remained small, fragmented, and highly divided. Worker protest on Swaziland's white farms and tin mines tended to take the hidden forms of desertion, malingering, insubordination, and theft (Crush, 1985, 1988; Booth, 1985). From the late 1930s, however, the economic and political landscape of colonial Swaziland was transformed by South African and British mining and agribusiness capital. The growth of a new internal working class, and its concentration in much larger production units, greatly enhanced the opportunities for coordinated labour action within the country (Booth, 1982, 1986). Yet between 1930 and 1962, the country experienced only one major clash between labour and capital. That was in February 1944 at the Havelock asbestos mine near Piggs Peak.

The strike itself was short-lived. There were few injuries and no loss of life though the rioters did considerable damage to carefully-selected buildings on the mine property. It did, however, come as something of a shock to local whites. The *Times of Swaziland*, for example, remarked that 'nothing occurring in Swaziland for 47 years has surprised and distressed (us) more than the riot which took place recently' (*Times of Swaziland* [TOS], 17 February 1944). In his annual address to the Swazi, the Resident Commissioner went further: 'everyone (is) ashamed of this action by the Swazis at Havelock because previously no such violence has been committed by Swazis during their history.'¹ Unable to reconcile the riot with the pervasive colonial myth of a docile and contrite Swazi worker, he blamed the violence on foreign agitators.

The mine had been in production for five years when the strike occurred. During that time, Havelock's owners had negotiated workable structures of labour control at the mine. By incorporating figures of traditional authority into these structures, mine management drew close to the Swazi aristocracy under Sobhuza in the years leading up to the strike. There is a tendency in the literature on Swaziland to see the growing rapprochement between Sobhuza and foreign capital in the post-WW II period as advantageous to both parties and therefore unproblematical. The events surrounding the strike revealed that the relationship could be contradictory; particularly where the needs of capital conflicted directly with the defence of customary rights by the aristocracy. The strike also forced the colonial state into a much closer public and private identification with the interests of foreign capital in Swaziland. The new symbiotic relationship between state and capital in Swaziland moved white settlers, who had traditionally enjoyed unquestioning access to state power on labour matters, into a far less honoured position.

The Compound

In 1929, the British corporation Turner and Newall acquired a block of 1,000 prospecting claims over asbestos-bearing land on the slopes of the Emlembe Mountain of the Makonjwa range in north-west Swaziland (Pim, 1932). The terrain was rugged and the area remote. Although the grazing was good, the soils

were poor and few Swazi lived there; it was, to quote one colonial official, 'the most valueless of all the Native Areas in Swaziland'.² But for the existence of a royal cattle post and forest stand, the land (known as Native Area 3) would probably have been swallowed up into a winter grazing farm for Boer farmers from the eastern Transvaal at the time of the partition in 1907 (Youe, 1978; Crush, 1980).

With unfavourable market conditions in the early 1930s, the veins of crysotile asbestos remained in the ground. In 1936, however, the market improved and Turner and Newall's New Amianthus Company began development work (Scott, 1950). The company spent 250,000 equipping the mine and trekked in 12,000 tons of heavy machinery (TOS, 6 March 1941). It constructed roads and bridges, and an aerial cableway to connect the mine with Barberton. The mine went into production for the first time in 1938 on a scale which dwarfed the small, under-capitalized tin and gold mines operating elsewhere in the country. By the early 1940s, the mine was hoisting 2,000 tons of ore per day, and shipping 600 on the cableway to the railhead at Barberton. The employment roll rose continuously so that by February 1944, the mine was employing 2,373 black workers (1,915 on the surface and 458 underground) and 108 white. The mine property was home to a further 1,500 people; relatives of both white and black employees.

In establishing its 'company town', New Amianthus Mines introduced an approach to labour management and control quite foreign to Swaziland. Turner and Newall's Shabani asbestos mine in Southern Rhodesia was one model for Havelock though broader trends in managerial ideology also made their mark (Phimister, 1978). From the outset, the mine made plans to stabilize skilled and supervisory black workers in settled accommodation. In practice, it found that family accommodation was a powerful complement to its local recruiting efforts. Married Swazi migrants, many with long experience on the Witwatersrand, found conditions at Havelock more to their liking. In the mid-1940s, the mine village contained 260 semi-detached housing units for married workers and their families. Unmarried migrants were housed in an adjoining open compound in single-sex dormitories, segregated by tribe. The mine deliberately employed an ethnically-diverse workforce to mitigate worker solidarity. By the mid-1940s Swazis, Mozambicans and long-distance migrants from Nyasaland were employed in roughly equal proportions.

In sharp contrast to the squalid conditions in neighbouring tin and gold-mining camps, Havelock management espoused and implemented a 'welfarist' approach to the organization of life and leisure on the mine. Through detailed attention to the social environment of the mine, the owners hoped to encourage long-service, workforce stability, and raise worker productivity. In addition to providing such amenities as a mine hospital, adequate storm-water drainage, laterines with water-borne sewerage and generous food rations, the company required that all black employees belong to the mine's Native Welfare Society. The Society organized wide-ranging 'entertainment of a mental nature' with the profits from membership dues and the mine beer-hall. Every Sunday, the mine reverberated with the sound of dance competitions and a brass band performing 'military airs'. The company built a soccer stadium for the workers and loaned the mine team a bus

for away matches. It provided a large recreation hall near the compound and showed free films every weekend to workers and their families.³

One visitor to the mine in 1945 noted that the workforce seemed relatively contented though he admitted that the calm may have been illusory. Only a year earlier, he recalled, there had been an unexpected 'riot'. In accounting for the riot, however, workers had made little reference to wages, working or living conditions (in marked contrast to the 1963 strike at the same mine).

The strike was directed more at the web of social relationships which governed life on and around the mine. Somewhat problematically for the company, their mineral rights lay squarely within Native Area 3. At various points in the 1930s, the colonial administration saw evidence of a looming conflict between the company and the Swazi owners of the land rights. Resident Commissioners Dickson and Marwick negotiated with Sobhuza on several occasions to persuade him to exchange Native Area 3 for better land elsewhere in the country. For various reasons Sobhuza refused, and the company had to be content with a 90 year lease of 4,000 acres in the middle of Native Area 3. On this tract the landscape was quickly transformed according to company designs. But the company had no control over events outside the boundaries of its leasehold.

As the Havelock mine developed, a shack settlement began to grow just north of the mine property on reserve land. Residents of the area were allocated land by the local chief – Sikuluvu 'Skroof' Dlamini – once they had *khonta'd* (pledged allegiance) in the usual fashion. Sikuluvu himself moved to the settlement in 1938 and set up business as a general dealer and trader with a partner, Moses Shiba.

By the early 1940s, Skroof's was inhabited by a diverse group of close to 200 people. In addition to current and ex-mine employees with their families, there were recent immigrants from the Transvaal, several people from other parts of Swaziland (including tradesmen, a Zionist pastor and a Swazi woman abandoned by her Nyasa husband) and homesteads recently evicted from white farms bordering Native Area 3.⁴ Most of the business at Skroof's was perfectly legal and mine management had little objection to workers obtaining various services there at low cost. Management could not afford to be as sanguine about other activities at Skroof's; particularly large-scale illicit liquor production.

Throughout 1938 and early 1939, management had continual run-ins with Chief Sikuluvu and the other residents of Skroof's. In June 1938, for example, the Compound Manager raided the settlement after a number of miners turned up for work completely intoxicated. He found 80 gallons of doctored beer still unconsumed.⁵ Skroof's also supplied the market for 'sigomfane', 'makajano', 'skokian', 'barberton' and 'kill-me-quick'; stronger brews with additives such as carbide, yeast, brown sugar, and potatoes (TOS 18 January 1940). The local colonial administration often assisted mine police in raids on Skroof's and prosecuted the brewers under the regulations of the 1936 Swaziland Liquor Licensing Act. But the ingenuity of the brewers and the volume of demand nullified the power of the law. In April 1940, Sikuluvu himself was prosecuted in the Piggs Peak court for illicitly brewing and selling beer. On this occasion he was acquitted on a technicality when the District Commissioner's own clerk pointed out that the beer was unfermented.⁶

In the late 1930s, the company applied to the Administration for permission to build its own beer-hall and brewery. Management anticipated that this would facilitate control of the drinking practices of the workforce and undermine the lucrative trade at Skroof's. The Resident Commissioner put the request to the settler-controlled European Advisory Council:

The applicant company is experiencing difficulty in keeping control over the Native Labourers employed, who wander away from the mine at week-ends in search of beer, and many of whom fail to return to work on Mondays. It is thought that the establishment of a beer-hall in the compound will stop, to a certain extent, this serious loss of labour at the beginning of each week.⁷

Missionaries and many white settlers objected to any policy that fell short of full prohibition. The problems at Havelock overrode these objections and the Administration amended the Liquor Act in early 1939 to allow employers to sell beer to their employees.

New Amianthus Mines built its beerhall at Havelock and began handing out rations and selling diluted *tswala*. The livelihood of the inhabitants of Skroof's was immediately threatened. In February and March 1939, there were work stoppages in protest at the company's demands that all drinking take place at the beer-hall. On the 13 March, a crowd of 1,000 workers gathered at Skroof's and then marched to the beer hall where they staged a peaceful demonstration outside.⁸

The company responded with coercion and concession. Reasoning that freer on-mine regulations might tempt workers to patronize the beer hall rather than Skroof's, management lifted the limit on the amount of beer which could be purchased. They also agreed to allow workers to consume the beer in the compound rather than just at the beer hall. In complementary fashion, they took steps to have Chief Sikuluvu and his followers evicted.

The company's desire to eradicate Skroof's became an obsession as time passed. In the mind of management, all problems of labour discipline and productivity originated there. John Starkey, the Mine Manager, castigated the Administration for its 'failure to control and liquidate settlements of undesirable natives surrounding the Mine, which ... are responsible for the brewing of illicit Beer, establishment of Brothels and provision of sanctuary of undesirable agitator elements, which have been and still are a source of trouble to the Mine Management.'⁹ The remedy was clear. For their part, colonial officials would have liked nothing better than to flatten Skroof's. They ordered repeated raids on the settlement and prosecuted vigorously but there were self-imposed constraints on how far they could go.

Colonial land legislation in the reserves was designed to bolster the power and prestige of traditional leaders. It therefore gave the Swazi chiefs proprietary rights over all reserve areas and allowed them to allocate land to whom they wished (Crush, 1987:131-66). Sikuluvu himself refused to move from the mine, pointing out that under colonial law he had every right to live there with his followers. Asked to order Sikuluvu to disband the settlement, Sobhuza backed up the chief. Though sympathetic to the company's viewpoint, Sobhuza and the *liqoqo* were adamant that the forced removal of Skroof's violated a basic constitutional prin-

ciple which the colonial administration itself held dear.¹⁰ When asked to allow the District Commissioner to vet the residents of Skroof's, Sobhuza responded that the movement and settlement of Swazi in and over the reserves had 'never been referred to District Commissioners for sanction.'¹¹ The contradictions between colonial land and labour policy were never clearer. Tensions continued to mount through the early 1940s. Then, in February 1944, the mine experienced its most serious turbulence yet.

The Riot

On the evening of the 1st February 1944 a group of Havelock mine *ndunas* met to discuss what action to take to protest against the dismissal of two of their number. One of the *ndunas*, Manuel Sibuyi, argued that they should 'tell the Shangaans and then go down and wreck the beerhall and break it'. Fenisi Mtombela described what happened after the meeting:

There were many people led by Sibuyi and Mhlanga armed with sticks. Sibuyi had a whistle. From the beerhall the crowd went to the Compound Manager's hut and broke all the windows. Mhlanga and Sibuyi were leading the mob. They marched to the football ground. Mhlanga said 'We must go to the aerial station.' The mob refused saying 'We have no grievance with those Whitemen, but only with the one in charge of the beerhall.' They all agreed, and the majority went past the Blantyre compound to the top Compound. Mhlanga and Sibuyi said to the Swazis 'Why are you idling? Hasn't your Nduna been dismissed?' That was when the Shangaans and the Swazis went to Bhayi's hut, broke into it and scattered all his belongings. It was after this the beerhall was attacked – some must have had axes – the beer vats were hacked to pieces also the steam pipes. The room next to the brewery containing bags of beans, malt and sugar was also broken and the contents thrown out.¹²

When the crowd gathered again on the football field next morning, the compound manager, Herbert Johnson, tried to address them. He was unable to make himself heard above the jeering and quickly turned and ran when sticks and rocks began to rain down on his head. The crowd chased after him but turned back when armed white employees fired several warning shots from the top of the mine dump next to the field.¹³

The workers then returned en masse to their compound and refused to negotiate with management or the local Assistant District Commissioner. Government Secretary Armstrong arrived from Mbabane that evening as did a large contingent of South African Police from Barberton and Ermelo who were immediately sworn in as 'Special Constables' in Swaziland and stationed around the mine. South African intervention had been requested by the Resident Commissioner and authorized by Smuts himself: 'the timely arrival of the Union police ... was of the greatest utility in preventing any further outbreak'.¹⁴

Throughout the morning of 3 February, the workers demanded that Sobhuza be present before they would begin negotiations. Sobhuza refused to go to the mine, inventing a tradition that 'it was not in accordance with native law and custom (to) deal personally with such a disturbance.'¹⁵ He did appoint three high

ranking members of the *liqoko* to mediate on his behalf. They were rushed to the mine in a car hired by the Administration. Protracted negotiations between mine management, workers and Sobhuza's representatives ensued. The representatives were unable to persuade the strikers to return to work before their grievances were addressed. These were presented on the 4 February whereupon the Government Secretary initiated a full-scale enquiry which lasted almost a week.¹⁶

The grievances were very specific, surprising the Secretary who was undoubtedly anticipating a broad-ranging attack on wages and general conditions at the mine. Instead the workers demanded the reinstatement of the two *ndunas* and filed a list of complaints against the compound manager, Herbert Johnson. Colonial officials found it hard to believe that these could have been responsible for the level and intensity of mass action witnessed during the strike. They were also intrigued by the behaviour of the 'mob' on the first night of the strike:

There was a great deal of other property close to the compound (for example hospital, kitchens and store) which they might have attacked ... this is significant when considered with the complaints of the labourers who took part in the riot and strike. There were no complaints as to the general conditions of work at the mine, nor against the higher authorities of the mine or the European employees in general.¹⁷

To explain the logic behind these actions it is necessary to briefly examine the interior world of the compound.

Dunbar Moodie has recently argued that everyday relations in the mine compounds of the Rand were governed by an implicit moral contract between workers and low-level mine management (Moodie, 1986, 1988). The moral economy of the mine implied certain obligations on the part of mine officials and set informal limits on the coercive treatment of the workforce. It also allowed a considerable measure of latitude for workers to regulate their private lives with regard to various technically forbidden practices, including compound brewing and drinking. The boundaries of the contract were never static but violation of its bounds could precipitate moral outrage, mass organization and collective action. In negotiating the moral economy of the mine, control over the supply and consumption of alcohol was always contested terrain. This was largely because the productivity of the workforce was powerfully shaped, in the eyes of management, by the drinking habits and practices of the mine workforce.

The imposition of capitalist work discipline demanded controls over the drinking of black miners. The country's smaller tin and gold mines were plagued by labour inefficiency due to uncontrolled liquor consumption at neighbouring homesteads (Crush, 1988). Swazi miners were also called upon by neighbouring chiefs to participate in communal agricultural activities. At the end of the day there was invariably a beer party. The chiefs adapted the timing of their demands to coincide with the calendar week. But the effects of a beer party on Saturday or Sunday often extended into 'Saint Monday'. On the Havelock mine the off-mine drinking activities of the mine workforce posed a similar challenge to efficiency and productivity. In the decade leading up to the strike in 1944, alcohol consequently became central to the construction of the moral economy of the mine.

By the mid-1930s, the colonial state had begun to acknowledge the futility of prohibition. If workers and urban residents could not be stopped from drinking, then the quantity and quality of alcohol consumed had to be regulated. By selling and issuing free rations of beer (or *tswala*) with high nutritional value and low alcohol content, employers sought to improve productivity and persuade workers from drinking the more potent home brews available nearby. By controlling drinking patterns, they sought to synchronize consumption with the daily and weekly work regimen. By drawing alcohol consumption onto mine property, management sought to circumscribe and police the drinking spaces of the workforce. Control over drinking required, in David Harvey's phrase, 'command over space'. By legitimizing consumption in certain places, and trying to prohibit it in others, mining capital sought to secure a sober and compliant workforce.

As elsewhere, state assistance was required to demarcate and police off-mine illicit drinking spaces. The colonial state attempted to eradicate illegal brewing and sale through harassment, prosecution and imprisonment of producers and consumers. But while the state might recapture tracts of illicit drinking space, it rarely tamed the brewers themselves. The best colonial officials could hope for was to drive brewers far enough away from mine properties to make them unattractive to their customers. Command over drinking space was never simply a question of territorial control, however. In seeking to close off certain spaces to brewers and drinkers, state and capital confronted pre-existing property rights in those areas. These could exert a strong influence on the off-mine access to alcohol enjoyed by miners. They could also severely complicate colonial attempts to control drinking.

At Havelock, the earlier beer protests at Skroof's in 1939 proved critical to the construction of the moral economy of the mine. Out of these incidents came a set of informal rules governing drinking practices on mine property and a new chain of command within the compound. As elsewhere, compound life was governed by an enormously powerful white Compound Manager. Under his control was a fleet of mine policemen ('boss-boys'). Between workers and the compound manager sat the *ndunas*. Their task was to communicate the manager's orders to workers, and to keep him informed of events in the compound.

In response to the beer protests, Havelock management decided to strengthen its lines of communication with the workforce. The company therefore asked Sobhuza to appoint a personal representative (or *tindvuna*) to live on the mine.¹⁸ Sobhuza jumped at the chance to enhance the status and image of the aristocracy in a new setting. In mid-1939 he appointed Chief Mhau Dlamini who had some experience in a similar role at Sobhuza's Sophiatown house in Johannesburg.¹⁹ Mhau was inserted into the mine hierarchy between the compound manager and the *ndunas*. His position was thoroughly ambiguous. He was on the company payroll and the mine clearly saw him as an arm of management, there to keep the peace and to communicate the orders of the compound manager. But to secure his own legitimacy among the workers (and ultimately Sobhuza's as well) he was forced to play a more delicate game in the moral economy of the mine. The ambiguities were resolved, with regard to the alcohol question, by an implicit contract between the various parties.

Table 1: War-Time Asbestos Production in Swaziland, 1939-46

Year	Quantity (Short Tons)	Value (£)
1939	4,591	95,903
1940	20,804	436,756
1941	21,127	507,364
1942	25,595	647,200
1943	16,907	444,413
1944	32,659	886,090
1945	23,416	665,362
1946	32,138	844,631

Source: *South African Mining and Engineering Journal* 8 March 1947.

The company's willingness to allow workers to consume beer hall *tswala* in the compound provided the opportunity to doctor the beer with sugar and other ingredients to enhance its potency and desirability. Management in turn regularly raided the compound for illicit beer but never before certain mutually acceptable procedures were followed. The mine strike inquiry of 1944 spent an inordinate amount of time trying to ascertain what these procedures were and why they had been violated.

When management periodically cracked down on compound brewers, the mine police were detailed by the compound manager to raid the rooms for beer. Prior to doing so they were to notify the *tindvuna* of their intentions. Rather than taking confiscated liquor directly to the compound manager they reported to the *nduna* of the compound. The *ndunas* took the beer to Sobhuza's *tindvuna*, Chief Mhau or his successor Chief Zece. The chief then reported the details to the compound manager who destroyed the alcohol and fined (or discharged) the offender.

There was thus a clear 'chain of command' within the compound, recognized by both workers and management, which gave the *tindvuna* a great deal of discretionary power over who would and would not be prosecuted. The evidence is clear that he exercised these discretionary powers and that not all cases were reported. The testimony of Dick Bhayi (a mine policeman) to the Enquiry is particularly interesting here:

I took the (confiscated) beer to the chief because I understood that anything illegal which was found should be taken to the chief. I thought the chief would send for me. When I came through the chief I did it according to native custom. When I realized that native custom was getting me no further I had to take other action. The Compound Manager might have got to hear on his own and he would have blamed me.²⁰

Bhayi's reference to 'native custom' is suggestive. It indicates, first, that the *tindvuna* had successfully reproduced his 'traditional' authority in the mine compound. But it also shows that Bhayi clearly recognized the existence of the 'customary procedures' of the moral economy and that he was explicitly violating them. In defence of his actions he implied, quite correctly, that he had only done so out of fear of the Compound Manager, Herbert Johnson.

Johnson had been on the mine since 1939 and was never particularly popular with the workers. However, he appears to have observed the informal rules of the moral economy for much of the time. In 1943, the company began a major push to increase production of an important war material. Production doubled in a year (Table 1). As part of this drive, the company tried to tighten up on discipline in the compound. Johnson systematically began to break the bounds of the moral contract.

He introduced a system of fines for 'loafing' and warned that any worker who was caught shirking would be 'given a hiding'. He began administering corporal punishment for such offences as trying to obtain more than one meat ration, changing a work ticket, and 'cheek'. Beerhall profits had been falling, so in January 1944 he launched a systematic attack on illegal brewing in the compound. He began raiding the compound himself and made the mine police personally responsible for beer found in their sections. If the police failed to notify the manager about brewing activity, both they and the brewer were fined or discharged.²¹ This placed the police in an invidious position.

At the end of January 1944, Dick Bhayi became aware of brewing activity in a house in the married quarters. He raided the house without telling Chief Zece and confiscated 6 drums of fermenting beer. He took the beer to Zece's. It became apparent to him that Zece had no intention of telling the Compound Manager when the chief later began handing out the beer to people in the compound. To save his own skin, Bhayi then took the unprecedented step of reporting the incident to the Compound Manager. Johnson was furious. He rebuked Zece in public, launched a series of personal raids on the compound, and fired two *ndunas* for failing to control brewing. That night the *ndunas* met to plan their protest against Johnson's violations of the moral economy of the mine.

Mobilizing the workers proved extremely easy. In the ensuing riot, the logic of the mob was transparent. The protestors attacked Johnson's offices, (and Johnson himself the next day on the soccer field), ransacked Dick Bhayi's quarters, and destroyed the beer hall and brewery. Nothing and no-one else was touched. After completing their job the workers returned to their compound and refused to move until their grievances against Johnson were addressed.

The Aftermath

The strike demonstrated that the apparatuses of the company state could not effectively function without more direct state involvement. To that point, the colonial state had played a largely passive role, collecting its share of mine profits and intervening in 'production politics' only when requested (see Burawoy, 1985). After the strike, the colonial state became more interventionist, and therefore assumed a much closer and public identification with the interests of big capital in the country.

In dealing with the strikers, colonial officials were determined to demonstrate that violence was an unacceptable response to worker dissatisfaction. Sobhuza's representatives concurred in speeches to the workforce at the end of the inquiry. Twenty-three workers were tried away from the mine property and convicted of

public mischief with sentences ranging from 6 months to 3 years imprisonment (TOS 13 April 1944).

The Assistant District Commissioner at Piggs Peak was officially reprimanded for failing to visit the mine regularly before the strike. Thereafter, he was ordered to keep in weekly contact with the mine manager, compound manager and Sobhuza's man. The state also appropriated from the public purse to pay 'trusties' (spies) in the compound.²² The District Commissioner was instructed to hold a weekly court at the mine and the administration built, equipped and staffed a police station on the mine property. The station was paid for out of a disguised grant from Colonial Development and Welfare Act funds.²³ The administration also decided to swear in the mine's 120 white male employees as Special Constables. The state later equipped the force with a Bren gun, 70 rifles, training, and a rifle range.²⁴

In the aftermath of the strike, mine management intensified its rhetorical onslaught against the brewers and residents of Skroof's, virtually blaming Sikuluvu and his followers for the whole affair. The investigation uncovered no direct evidence of any collusion and colonial officials repeatedly exonerated Sikuluvu in private conversation and correspondence.²⁵ But they were alive to the possibilities of the moment. In public meetings with Sobhuza and the *liqoqo* they adopted the company's position:

You will all know how the Swazis working at Havelock Mine were foolish enough to join in a riot and do a lot of damage to the mine ... Many people also lived on the Native Area next to the mine, where the Chief had allowed them to come and live, although they had no claim to land there. Many of these people were brewing beer and putting medicine into it, and selling it in the mine compound, which is forbidden by law. I cannot allow a lot of undesirable good-for-nothing lawbreakers to hang about the neighbourhood of the mine. (TOS 1 June 1944)

Police raids on Skroof's intensified dramatically in the weeks after the strike.²⁶ Large quantities of *sigomfane* and *makajano* were destroyed. Union police joined in the effort by cracking down on brewers over the Transvaal border.

The state ordered a census of Skroof's and began evicting 'undesirables' (including the Zionist pastor). To get round the constitutional issue, the Resident Commissioner used the Swaziland Defence Regulations of 1939 which gave him the power to protect the interests of a vital war-time industry. The use of emergency regulations in this context was a patent abuse of these powers, as the Resident Commissioner privately admitted. Sobhuza protested vigorously. The state backed down on its plans to completely eradicate Skroof's, adopting instead a policy of intensive policing of the settlement.²⁷ The 'constant irritant' of police harassment produced numerous convictions in the years following the strike. By the late 1940s, the number of prosecutions had fallen markedly.²⁸ In 1947, the state re-opened negotiations with Sobhuza for the exchange of Native Area 3.²⁹

The inquiry into the strike placed much of the blame on the Compound Manager, Herbert Johnson, though it failed to place his behaviour in the context of the production imperatives of the mine. Despite a long history with the company he was viewed as 'temperamentally unsuited' for the post by the Government Secre-

tary. The administration recommended his transfer from Havelock. The company initially agreed to remove Johnson and then refused.³⁰ Starkey, the mine manager, argued that to transfer Johnson right after the strike would be seen as a victory for the workers and a vindication of their protests. The local administration referred the issue to London. In November 1944, the Under-Secretary of State met with the Chairman of the parent company, Turner and Newall, and urged that Johnson be removed.³¹ Johnson was reigned in by management and finally transferred to Shabani in September 1945. As Moodie suggests, the security of tenure of the Compound Manager and the bounds of the moral economy were inseparable.

Burawoy (1985) has argued that strikes on the Zambian Copperbelt in the 1940s dramatically demonstrated that tribal elders were ineffective for industrial conciliation and therefore unreliable for social control. As a result, the elders were pushed aside as representatives of the workforce in favour of a more modern bureaucratic approach to industrial relations. In Swaziland, the outcome of the 1944 Havelock strike was exactly the opposite. The strike reinforced rather than undermined the 'chain of command' within the compound. Dick Bhayi, for example, was easily sacrificed and the mine dismissed him immediately; ironically, for following orders which transgressed the moral economy of the compound. Chief Zece played no role in the strike and, indeed, was unable to exercise any control over the rioters. Yet at no point in the enquiry did any of the numerous witnesses question his authority and actions. On the contrary, the witnesses worked hard to keep Zece on side by protesting his treatment by the Compound Manager. Prominent among the list of grievances was an extraordinary complaint that Johnson had called Zece a 'bloody swine' in an exchange fully four months before the strike.³²

The authority of the *indvuna* was enhanced by Sobhuza's speedy reaction to the workers' call for outside mediation in the strike. In the aftermath of the strike, the company restructured its lines of communication with the compound. The *tindvuna* was now given immediate and regular access to both the mine manager and the District Commissioner. This simultaneously reduced the autocratic power of the Compound Manager and enhanced the prestige of Sobhuza's representative on the mine. The *tindvuna* system was to prove a workable option on the mine for at least another decade. In the 1950s it was extended to the country's burgeoning commercial agriculture sector. By the late 1950s, the limitations of the system were beginning to show. When the entire workforce went on strike at Havelock in 1963, one of their major grievances was against the mine *ndunas* and Sobhuza's representative on the mine.³³

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for funding the research on which this paper is based. Earlier versions were presented at the African Studies Association Annual Meetings in Chicago and the South African Historical Society Meetings in Pietermaritzburg. I am grateful to participants at both of these meetings for their comments.

Notes

1. Swaziland National Archives (SNA), File No. 15A, Resident Commissioner's Speech to Swazi National Council, 22 May 1944.
2. SNA, File No 1246I, Suggested Exchange for Adjoining Land, New Amianthus Mines.
3. For descriptions of conditions at Havelock see TOS 6 March 1941, 15 May 1941, 22 November 1945, 29 November 1945; Kuper (1947: 13).
4. SNA, RCS 659, List of Habitations and Population on Reserved Portion N.A.3.
5. SNA, RCS 659, Memorandum on Sikuluvu Dlamini, 21 August 1944.
6. *Ibid.*
7. SNA, Minutes of 4th Session of 6th European Advisory Council, 22 December 1937, statement by Resident Commissioner; SNA, RCS 726/37, Application to Establish Brewery at Havelock Mine.
8. SNA, RCS 726/37; and SNA, RCS 630/39-55/40, Annual Reports from District Commissioners, Peak District, 1939.
9. SNA, C191 Vol.1, Starkey to Armstrong, 22 February 1944.
10. SNA, RCS 726/37, Notes of Meeting of Resident Commissioner with Paramount Chief, 15 March 1939; RCS 37A, Minute by E. Featherstone, 11 May 1944.
11. SNA, RCS 659, Sobhuza II to Armstrong, 5 May 1944. Sobhuza's view that this was an important question of principle was clearly conditioned by his involvement at the time in renewed attempts to regain land lost earlier in the century; see Kuper (1978: 75-96).
12. SNA, C191, Vol. 1, Report on Havelock Mine Disturbance, 15 February 1944, statement by Fenisi Mtombela.
13. SNA, C191, Vol. 1, Featherstone to Harlech, 17 February 1944.
14. Public Records Office (PRO), DO 35/1179, Harlech to Machtig, 10 February 1944.
15. PRO, DO 35/1179, Featherstone to Harlech, 3 February 1944.
16. See SNA, C191, Vol.1, Inquiry into Complaints of Native Strikers on the Havelock Mine; and PRO, DO 35/1179, Swaziland Mining: Disturbance at Havelock.
17. SNA, C191, Vol. 1, Featherstone to Harlech, 17 February 1944.
18. SNA, RCS630/39-55/40, Annual Reports from District Commissioners, Peak District, 1939.
19. In the early 1920s, Sobhuza established a social centre in Sophiatown for Swazi miners to help bolster the prestige of the aristocracy on the Rand; Kuper (1978).
20. SNA, C191 Vol. 1, Inquiry into Complaints of Native Striker son the Havelock Mine, statement by Dick Bhayi.

21. SNA, C191 Vol. 1, Inquiry into Complaints of Native Striker son the Havelock Mine, statement by Herbert Johnson.
22. SNA, RCS 657, Police: Havelock Special Constables.
23. SNA, RCS 658, Police Post at Havelock Mine.
24. SNA, C191 Vol.2, Brigadier to Resident Commissioner, 23 May 1946.
25. PRO, DO 35/1179, Tait to Shepherd, 12 May 1944; SNA, RCS 37A, Government Secretary to New Amianthus Mines, July 1944; RCS 659, Assistant District Commissioner (Peak) to Acting District Commissioner (Mbabane), 13 July 1944.
26. SNA, RCS 659, Starkey to Armstrong, 21 August 1944.
27. SNA, RCS 659, Minutes of Annual Meeting of General Council of Chiefs, 22-31 May 1944.
28. SNA, District Commmissioner (Peak District), File 37A, Minute by E.Featherstone, 11 May 1944; Assistant District Commissioner to Government Secretary, 6 December 1946.
29. SNA, File 1246II, Minutes of Meeting of Resident Commissioner and Native Authority, 1 August 1947.
30. PRO, DO 35/1179, Huggard to Machtig, 14 September 1944.
31. PRO, DO 35/1179, Machtig to Baring, 27 December 1944.
32. SNA, C191 Vol. 1, Inquiry into Complaints of Native Strikers on the Havelock Mine, Complaint No 3.
33. SNA, DC 262A, 'A Board of Enquiry into the Trade Dispute at the Havelock Mine. Report of the Board of Enquiry', pp.15-22.

References

- Bonner, P. 1979. 'The 1920 Black Mine Workers Strike: A Preliminary Account.' pp. 273-97 in *Labour, Townships and Protest*, edited by B. Bozzoli. Johannesburg. Ravan Press.
- Booth, A. 1982. 'The Development of the Swazi Labour Market 1900-1968.' *South African Labour Bulletin* 7:34-57.
- , 1983. *Swaziland: Tradition and Change in a Southern African Kingdom*. Boulder. Westview Press.
- , 1985. 'Homestead, State, and Migrant Labor in Colonial Swaziland.' *African Economic History* 14:107-45.
- , 1986. 'Capitalism and the Competition for Swazi Labour 1945-60.' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 13:125-50.
- Burawoy, M. 1985. *The Politics of Production*. London. Verso.
- Catchpole, F.C. 1960. 'Report on Labour Legislation in Swaziland'. Mbabane.
- Crush, J. 1980. 'The Colonial Division of Space: The Significance of the Swaziland Land Partition.' *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 13:51-86.

- , 1985. 'Landlords, Tenants and Colonial Social Engineers: The Farm Labour Question in Early Colonial Swaziland.' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 11:235-57.
- , 1987. *The Struggle for Swazi Labour*. Montreal/Kingston. Gill-Queen's Press.
- , 1988. 'Tin, Time and Space in the Valley of Heaven.' *Transactions of Institute of British Geographers* 13:211-21.
- , Forthcoming. 'Labour Relations and the Colonial State in Swaziland.' in *Colonialism and Development in the Contemporary World*, edited by C. Dixon and M. Heffernan. London.
- Fransman, M. 1978. *The State and Development in Swaziland 1960-1977*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Sussex, Brighton, 1978.
- Kuper, H. 1947. *The Uniform of Colour*. Johannesburg. University of Witwatersrand Press.
- , 1978. *Sobhuza II: Ngwenyama and King of Swaziland*. London. Duckworth.
- Moodie, D. 1986. 'The Moral Economy of the Black Miners' Strike of 1946.' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 13:1-35.
- , 1988. 'The 1946 Black Miners' Strike.' Paper presented at African Studies Seminar, Queen's University.
- Phimister, I. 1978. 'African Labour Conditions and Health in the Southern Rhodesian Mining Industry, 1898-1953.' pp.102-50 in *Studies in the History of African Mine Labour in Colonial Zimbabwe*, edited by I. Phimister and C. Van Onselen. Gwelo. Mambo Press.
- Pim, A. 1932. *Financial and Economic Situation of Swaziland: Report of the Commission Appointed by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs*. London. Dominions Office.
- Scott, P. 1950. 'Mineral Development in Swaziland.' *Economic Geography* 26:196-213.
- Youe, C. 1978. 'Imperial Land Policy and the Swazi Response.' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 7:56-70.

Jonathan Crush
 Department of Geography
 Queen's University
 Kingston, Canada
 K7L 3N6